

Roberts, James Alexander

Oct 1915-June 1916  
(24)

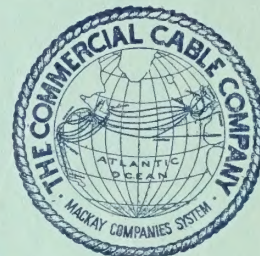
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Salonica Nov. 11th-15.

President Falconer,

University Toronto Canada.

Arrived all well.

Roberts.

2 27pm.

978

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# GREAT NORTH WESTERN CABLEGRAM

Z. A. LASH. PRESIDENT

GEO. D. PERRY. GENERAL MANAGER

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Oct. 12, 1915

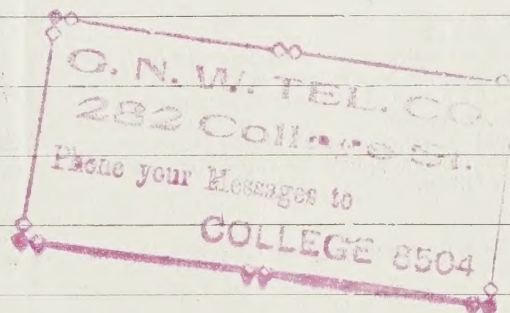
8 N C 1030 am 21

Folkestone

President F lconer,  
University Toronto .

MacKenzie urgently needed Mediterranean if University consent  
have minister militia cable withdrawing order for return hurry .

Roberts .



# Canadian Pacific Railway Company's Telegraph

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS



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**J. McMILLAN,**  
Manager Telegraphs, Montreal.

18  
Cable 10  
Salonica via 22-15

Falconer University Toronto

Merry Christmas all friends number

four - Roberts

Your nearest Telegraph office is

Hanna's Drug Store

221 Spadina Ave.

Telephone College 227



St. Martin's Plain,  
Shorncliffe,  
England.

October 13th, 1915.

President R.A. Falconer,  
University of Toronto.

Dear Dr. Falconer,-

I am sure that you with all other University officials at home will rejoice to know that there is every prospect that our Hospital will proceed on active service overseas at an early date. We received orders a week ago to mobilize for service in the Mediterranean, sailing on Sunday last. At the last moment these orders were cancelled and we are marking time, with the prospect that we sail the coming Saturday or Sunday.

Our stores and equipment which had been assembled at Southampton have been transferred to Devonport and it is highly probable that we will sail ~~for~~ <sup>from</sup> that port.

Our Nursing Sisters are assembled in London and the Officers who are to go and the bulk of the men are mobilized here.

I think our equipment is absolutely as complete as we can make it under the circumstances. The Officers have thoroughly discussed all branches of the probable work we will be called upon to do and we have made provision accordingly. In arranging the lists of equipment desired I have divided the work among the senior men representing the various branches interested,- Captain MacKenzie and Duncan Graham in pathology; Colonel Primrose in surgery; Colonel Chambers in Medicine and so on. These men have all given the best attention to the subject and I believe the equipment as they have suggested should be thoroughly adequate. Of course we don't know definitely where we are going or all the conditions we will be called upon to face, so that when we are definitely settled we may find certain deficiencies which can then be filled.

I have written Dr. Clarke giving him a list of the Officers who will not be available to go away with me and as you will see it is a fairly formidable one. However those remaining are quite enthusiastic and I feel that they are capable of handling any conditions that may arise. Two of our graduates of last year, Van Wyck and Crompton, have received

Commissions with us and I feel that they will be decided acquisitions to the staff. We are also taking away four men who would be in their fifth year at the University if at home. These men are Sergeant-Major F.M.Johnson, and Sergeants E.A.Broughton, R.M.Harvie, and E.G.Berry. When the order came asking that all the final-year students be returned to the University I called together the Officers of the unit who are active in University work at home and we thoroughly discussed the whole situation. We feel that these men who have worked in the most conscientious manner with us for the past six months have become almost invaluable for the efficiency of the unit. To take them home would cripple us in a way that we are powerless to rectify. We feel that the training and work that these men have received and will receive is of far more practical value to them from a professional point of view than they would obtain in the fifth year course at home. On our advice they have remained with the unit and we sincerely hope that the University will give them the fair consideration that their conduct deserves, and will grant them their degrees next spring. We intend to ~~say~~ so arrange matters that these men will receive the most thorough and valuable training that the circumstances will permit.

I scarcely know what to say to you about the matter of supplies which the University ladies have been making for us. Had we gone to France I could have arranged that they be delivered to us but now the matter has become distinctly complicated and until I become intimate with the new conditions I cannot speak with any assurance on the matter. In discussing this question recently with the Director-General here he assured me that there was no dearth in the matter of surgical supplies at the disposal of the medical authorities and advised me to curtail the work and expenditure along this line at home. If that advice held good for conditions in France it is more than probable that it will hold good in the East where facilities for transportation will be more or less complicated, and there will be considerable <sup>very</sup> probability that the goods shipped to us would ever reach us. However I will keep you informed on this subject as soon as I am in a position to do so.

The Officers and men are very enthusiastic over the prospect of taking up the work we came over here to do. This prolonged period of more or less forced inaction with a separation of the various elements of the unit has been particularly trying to us all under the circumstances and at times has been almost depressing. Now we are all buoyed up by being reunited and having an opportunity to work as our University unit.

President R.A.Falconer-

-3-

-13/10/15.

I yesterday cabled you regarding Capt. MacKenzie. As you know it was arranged that he should return to his University work and the orders are issued for him to sail on Friday next. At that time there was no prospect for our movement and if we did move the probability was that we would be sent to France. Under those conditions we all feel that it was perhaps wise that Captain MacKenzie should return to Canada but these Mediterranean orders have entirely upset our view-point. The work there is of an entirely different character to that met in France and from the prevalence of typhoid, dysentery, etc. we feel that Captain MacKenzie would be almost invaluable to the unit, especially as Duncan Graham has not yet been returned to us. It is hard to fathom why he has not returned as I have repeatedly insisted that his presence is essential on the staff of this unit, and have been assured by every member of our Headquarters Staff that he has been ordered to report. However, only this morning I learned on good authority that no word has yet reached him and I have dispatched a message to the Director-General to that effect. It doesn't look quite right to me and I am afraid someone is preventing his return to this unit. In case such a state of affairs develops I will cable you asking you to take up the matter with the Minister of Militia and have orders issued by him that Graham follow us to our Mediterranean destination..

The Nursing Sisters are all well with the exception of Miss Fellows who contracted para-typhoid in France and is not sufficiently recovered to go with us. You would be really interested to see the healthy appearance of almost every other Sister on the staff. Our Officers are also very well. They unite with me in sending sincere respects and regards to you and I intend to keep you posted on future developments regarding the unit.

Sincerely,

*J.A. Radcliffe.*

November 22nd, 1915

Surgeon-General J. A. Roberts,  
No. 4 Canadian General Hospital (University of Toronto),  
Salonika.

My dear General Roberts:

Allow me at the beginning to congratulate you on your promotion, the news of which reached the city last week. I am sure it will be gratifying to your many friends, and I think it is an indication that our Hospital is given a very important position in connection with the medical work in the Mediterranean.

You will have received a cable from Dr. Clarke by this time asking for more news as to what the Hospital is doing. We find it necessary to be able to tell the public something in order to maintain the interest of the people. They are willing to work but they would like to know what kind of work should be done, and any little information that you may give from time to time will be a great stimulus. We are asking you to be good enough to send us monthly reports.

It has been extremely interesting to us to know that you have gone to Salonika, where undoubtedly you will be in the thick of the struggle. We are watching every day with the greatest anxiety news that comes from your quarter, but we comfort ourselves with the belief that being a base hospital at Salonika you will have ample protection. You must be in the midst of most interesting events, and I suppose that you hear a great deal that never reaches the newspapers. We can only hope that affairs in the Balkans will eventually be less important than we suppose they might be for the more one studies the situation the less reasonable does it seem to be that Germany should be able to deal a deadly blow so far from her base, particularly with her reduced numbers.

I was glad to get your long letter about a fortnight ago, and sorry to learn from it that Dr. McKeown had not gone to the Mediterranean with you. I have written to ask him what work he has been transferred to in England in order to find out whether leave of absence shall be continued.

As you will have heard from Dr. Clarke we are managing to get the work of the Faculty of Medicine done this winter, though little difficulties crop up continually. Our Pathology is

handed over to men without much experience, and this morning a slight trouble has originated which would not have happened if the head of one of our departments, who is with you, had been home. However, we shall work through these matters. The attendance in Medicine is very large, though in the other Faculties the men are fewer, and there is constant recruiting going on.

Please give my kind regards to your Staff. Tell them that we often think of them and that a great many people both in and outside the University have the Hospital in mind. The ladies are still working hard.

With kind regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

President.

NO. 4 CANADIAN GENERAL HOSPITAL  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
.....

With the British Force in Greece,  
December 29th, 1915.

Dr. C. K. Clarke,  
Superintendent, Toronto General Hospital,  
Toronto, Ont.,  
CANADA.

Dear Dr. Clarke:-

The excitement following the rush of cases described in my last letter to you has pretty well subsided now and we have settled into the orderly routine of our hospital work; not that we have been falling off much in our admissions and discharges, for the average has remained well over the thousand mark ever since that time, but there has been no constant influx of convoys all night and discharges to the Ship which characterized the ten days already described to you. There are, of course, a tremendous number of troops here, more than perhaps you have any idea of, but the congestion is relieved by the opening up of two additional general hospitals not far from us, both of which are receiving patients, consequently relieving us of the earlier congestion. We are quite willing to have the relaxation come our way temporarily but as I have often informed the authorities here if they will give us 2000 beds and a few more men for the routine work we will handle anything up to that number just as easily as we will our establishment of 1040, and we are all very much happier when the pressure is greatest.

The conditions here have changed somewhat in the past two weeks owing to the retirement of the Allied Forces from Serbia and Bulgaria and the assuming of other new posts in this District. The rearrangement of the troops has considerably altered the view from our encampment and although we can still see a good many of them in our vicinity we are also able to make out the French positions in the hills almost better than those of the British who have swung off in another direction from that originally occupied.

The building operations of our huts which had commenced shortly after December 10th, proceeded very slowly and had, in fact, only progressed so far as to have the outline of the hut positions marked out by shallow trenches in the ground and thirty or forty loads of stone for foundation purposes deposited on our grounds. Then suddenly came the change in the general British position and coincident with this the orders for the cessation of all building operations here. Ever since our arrival we have been living in an atmosphere of uncertainty, each day bringing a fresh rumour as to our ultimate disposition and the impression has been given that from day to day we might look for a change in our site. In consequence we are still occupying the more or less crowded confines in which we pitched our first encampment in order to conform to the plan outlined by the Engineers' Department, and unless something of a definite nature develops soon it looks as though we would continue to occupy our present situation for the immediate future at any rate. For four or five weeks following our arrival here even the local military authorities were unable to give any definite information concerning the probable duration of our stay, in fact the general impression seemed to be that the whole movement of the troops from this district might take place at any time. Under these circumstances it was absolutely impossible for me to forward any plans to you concerning our future movements or our future needs in our work here. As a matter of

fact I am not much better posted at the present moment than I was then save in the one fact that it is highly probable we will be stationed here for an indefinite period.

The real needs of the hospital from the surgical point of view have scarcely developed as yet owing to the lack of any active fighting having taken place, save the few casualties resulting in the retirement from Serbia. Our supply of dressings, etc., taken with our own stores is far from being exhausted and with the additional consignment which you have advised me is on the way, we should be well supplied for a considerable time to come. The bulk of our work is, as before mentioned, medical in character and I think the total number of operations done in the hospital to date is something like 130. We have had a good many serious injuries to handle, usually the results of falls from horses, motor accidents and gun shot wounds; scarcely a day passes in which one of our Surgeons does not have to spend a considerable time in trying to reconstruct some poor fellow who has been all smashed up in one or other of these ways. The Medical Depot of Medical Stores have a fair amount of most of the materials that we need in carrying on our work but there are some items which might be supplemented from home if you could obtain them for us. I believe that our supply of unprepared cat-gut is getting fairly low and although we have been promised a fresh supply, I think it would be wise to have some reserve on hand for emergency purposes. I know of no one who is in a better position to get this than yourself and Col. Primrose has just told me that he thinks you send about \$500. worth of No. 1 and No. 2, principally the latter size. Novocaine is also a very scarce article here and we think you might be able to get some to better advantage in Canada or the United States. We are also in need of surgical plaster for the preparation of casts, splints, etc. You know the leaning of most of our surgeons towards the use of plaster in all cases where a splint can be used and as we have had a good many fractures to deal with our supply is very low. I think we obtained this either from you or the Sick Children's Hospital, I am inclined to believe the latter. Col. Chamber would like a half-dozen haemocytometers and a duodenal pump. The laboratory would like you to use iron (you are supposed to know who he is) to make up about 500 c.c. of Wright's stain and please have it put in something that won't break as all this stuff is sure to be knocked around pretty well before it gets to us. I have been in communication with the British Red Cross authorities and have been assured that they will forward without delay any materials addressed to us that are sent through them, and we have sent our tracers to try and locate all the articles mentioned in your earlier letter as having been sent by you. No doubt we will hear something about them before long.

I wish you would convey to the ladies who were so good as to raise the \$250. for Christmas cheer in the hospital some idea of how much it was appreciated by the men. Owing to our isolated position we were completely out of touch with any of the usual channels through which the Christmas cheer comes to the troops. Had we been in France our Canadian Red Cross Society would have furnished turkeys and plum puddings for Christmas dinner for all the patients, but being so far away their circular dealing with the matter reached us only on Christmas Day, so it was well that we depended only on our own efforts to make the celebration appear in some small measure at least to resemble what Christmas should represent. The \$250. did not cover expenses as we had about 1060 patients to provide for and the prices here are quite exorbitant for everything. The supply also is very limited, and had I not had the foresight to purchase some turkeys about three weeks before Christmas and herd them in an enclosure behind our lines, we would have been absolutely without any fowl for the day. The price of turkey went up to 90 and 100 drachma per bird the day before Christmas, and although perhaps that was an exceptional price, I met a good many men who had paid from 50 to 60 drachma for their Christmas turkey. (As you know five drachma equal roughly our \$1.00).

About our Christmas here I can sum the whole of our celebration up by saying that it was a decided success in every way. I had procured all the available material for decorating the wards and although it was not very much, still the ingenuity of the men enabled them to supplement it very largely by the use of all the coloured bits of paper they could find, most of this coming from the wrappings of dressings, parcels, etc. Their originality in creating designs from this material, supplemented by the free use of cleverly executed mottoes, gave a very bright and cheery appearance to the hospital. They also used absorbent cotton very largely in their decorative schemes, outlining words and figures of all kinds on the tent wall by little pieces of this material adhering to suspended blankets or to the tent walls themselves. In almost every case the inscriptions were an eulogy of Canadian No. 4 Canadian General Hospital, a great many of them having words of praise for the Officers and Nursing Sisters in charge of the various sections. It was most pleasing to see how the Christmas spirit permeated all the sick. They were delighted that we took so much interest in them and tried to make the time something in the nature of a celebration for them. All of the convalescents directed their energies for two or three days prior to the date in supplementing our work by every means in their power. A great many of these men have latent designing and drawing abilities and some of their decorations were not only original but very cleverly done. Each man received a parcel containing a number of articles such as would be useful to Tommy under the present circumstance such as handkerchiefs; muffler, socks, shaving material of all kinds; soap; tooth brush; razor; gloves or mittens; cigarettes; tobacco; pipe; chocolate and the usual nuts, raisins and oranges thrown in for good measure. Of course we had to be a little guarded as to the cases receiving all these extras but the men were very good about carrying out our instructions and as a result we had very few instances in which any patient showed ill effects as a result of the liberties he took with his stomach on Christmas Day. Some of the dummy soldiers made by the patients around the wards were particularly ingenious. By arranging a series of pulleys they were able to make them salute and go through a few simple movements of that kind whenever an Officer approached their wards, much to their own and the bystanders amusement. The censors have shown me a number of letters written from the hospital since Christmas and I almost felt like making a copy of one of them and sending it home to you. The poor chaps have certainly appreciated any efforts we made on their behalf and as one old soldier with many years army experience said, he had never known a Christmas to compare with this since he joined the army.

About noon a burlesque lédrosse match was put on by the Officers of the Unit, a full report of which I hope will be sent to you at a later date. The men also had an abbreviated foot-ball match shortly after dinner. In the evening the N.C.O's and Men gave a concert in their mess tent, which was attended by everyone. It was mighty well done and I am enclosing you one of the programmes in case it might interest you.

I am glad to report that we have been free from sickness among the Officers for a couple of weeks now, although one or two of the Nursing Sisters have been off for a couple of days at a time. One of the girls, Miss Oram, has been running a slight temperature, 99.2 or 3, and feeling a bit miserable for the last few days, but we have kept her off duty, and the Physicians are not at all worried over her condition and have informed me that she will be about again in a few days. Immediately following the cold snap ~~which~~ of three weeks ago several of the nurses were off duty for a few days suffering from chilblains. The condition affected the hands of some, the feet of others, and was

characterized by swelling of a puffy character, redness, a certain amount of general inflammatory reaction and in some cases vesication. As soon as any signs of the condition developed the Sisters were taken off duty and I am glad to say that we have not had any fresh cases develop during the past three weeks. I think it was entirely due to the cold damp weather accompanied by the extreme high winds, and the fact that it was impossible for us to provide an adequate supply of hot water for the work on the wards. I feel that any difficulties the Sisters will have to meet will come from the ground up rather than from the general atmospheric conditions as owing to the peculiar character of this clay it assumes the consistency of putty when wet and remains damp and cold for days following each storm. Personally the only discomfort I feel is from this source and I have a good deal of difficulty at such times in keeping my feet properly warm. I have been trying to impress upon Miss Hartley the necessity of the Sisters protecting themselves against this condition no matter how unmilitary their costumes may appear, and I think they are doing so now, at least I hope so. It is really surprising how comfortably the girls have settled down in these big Indian pattern tents. You know a man never could make a tent or anywhere else look very homelike, but before the girls were there more than a day that peculiar feminine touch came into play, or someone waved a fairy wand. Anyway their tents are the cosiest looking places you could imagine. I have succeeded in getting a large walled hospital marquee which we have pitched in their camp site and will use it as a hospital ward for any of the Sisters who may be ill in the future. This will facilitate proper attention both from a medical and nursing standpoint.

Concerning all your particular friends in the Unit I need say nothing as I am sure both Mackenzie and Col. Primrose keep in touch with you more or less faithfully, but I do want you to know just how well Prim. has played the game ever since he left home. He is not the same man I knew in our work there, and is absolutely unselfish and unsparing in his efforts to do everything as conscientiously and thoroughly as only Prim. knows how to do it. Graham Chambers is like a boy of 25 again; in fact he is quite the youngest member of the Unit. He spends his evenings now learning to play bridge, but according to Donnie McGillivray the learning operation is absolutely hopeless. Graham has secured a number of books on the subject but the more he reads the worse he plays, according to Don. Some of their conversations during an evening are really as good as a vaudeville show.

This Dental Department of ours is an extremely important factor in our hospital work and I simply do not know how to frame adequate words to convey my appreciation of the work done by Capt. Gow and Capt. Mallory. There has been no other Dental Department opened here so far and these men have tried to carry on for all the British troops in this District. The number is well over 100,000 and their clinic has been besieged from morning till night by men of every rank. The Department is working so hard that I am just a little nervous for fear these men will play out and have insisted that they take off at least a half day each week. The strain is certainly beginning to tell. I feel that under the circumstances we should have another dental surgeon with us as practically every man coming into the hospital requires more or less dental treatment. The condition of the Tommie's mouths is simply bad beyond description. I am sure I do not exaggerate when I say that each man coming in requires the attention of a dental surgeon for from one to ten hours of his time. Even then the relief given would be only of the most temporary character. I would very much like to have Dr. Guy Hume of 2 Bloor St. East if I have to have a third, and if the local authorities are willing to supplement my dental staff I will make application for him directly both to the Senior Dental Officer in England, and to our Militia Department at home.

I am finding plenty of work to do for our mutual friend Sister Coxall and she is proving absolutely invaluable to me in my clerical work; in fact I think I am getting spoiled and do not know how I will sit down and write a letter with my own fist when I get back home. However, there is one very certain thing that when I do get back there will be very few letters that I will write.

I saw Miss Clarke this afternoon. She is looking extremely well and is, I think, putting on weight. It may be only extra clothes, but it certainly looked like weight to me. She also reports that she is in excellent health. She was one of the unfortunate girls who had some trouble with her hands during the cold weather, but her trouble was, I would say, quite mild in character and caused her inconvenience for only a very few days.

I do hope you are making these sort of partnership letters with President Falconer and it would be only a repetition to write to both of you.

Everyone writes with me in sending love, all kinds of good wishes, etc. to the Dean.

Yours sincerely,

J. A. ROBERTS

P.S. During the transshipping of our equipment from one ship to the other at Alexandria the small case containing Billy Lowry's eye magnet fell into the sea. I have had the case thoroughly dragged in an effort to recover it, but the attempt has been unsuccessful. Lowry has been talking to me on the subject and seems very anxious to have a magnet with him. He has had a number of cases suitable for its use and has been unable to handle them without it. Could you see Mr. James of the Wartz Co. from whom the original one was purchased and have another shipped to me here?

J.A.R.

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February 11th, 1916

Surgeon-General J. A. Roberts,  
No. 4 Canadian General Hospital, (University of Toronto)  
Salonika, Greece.

My dear General Roberts:

We are very much interested in the letters that you are sending to the Dean and gratified that the work that you have been able to do since you have gone to Salonika. I congratulate you on the spirit that you have been able to maintain in the Hospital. The fact that your staff is working so well together must be a great comfort to you in the midst of all the pressing business of the campaign.

We have been relieved to know that no damage was done to the Hospital or to any of its members by the visits of the airmen. It is a brutal business this method of the Germans of bombing Hospitals and even unfortified cities in Britain. The fact that it continues seems almost to intensify the war because there is no sign of repentance.

At the request of the military authorities we are going to conduct the fourth and fifth years in England during the coming summer so that men may get ready more quickly for the front. There will also be a fifth year next year for those who have come back in the fourth year.

There is a great deal of restlessness on the part of the junior members of the staff who want to go to the front. However, I am arranging for an interview at Ottawa for the purpose of

seeing whether we cannot secure some authoritative recognition of the services of these men who are compelled to stay home in order to do University and Hospital duty here. It is only fair to them that something should be done.

We have had a good deal of difficulty this winter in arranging for Pathology, and I am afraid that next winter we shall have to ask for Mackenzie to come back. I should think that by that time he will have got your Hospital work into such running order that you might spare him to us for the winter months. With Emma there the work cannot suffer and we are easily in receipt of him here. I am going to write Mackenzie himself about the matter and then if you agree to our release we shall arrange for the order being given to Headquarters.

The ladies are still working for the Hospital through most of the year but they do is being turned into Red Cross as you do not seem to need special supplies, and they are also informed that you can draw on the Red Cross at the other end if they need it here.

We are always glad to hear from you. With kind regards,

Yours,

Yours sincerely,

President.

February 16th, 1916

Surgeon-General J. A. Roberts,

O.C. No. 4 Canadian General Hospital,

Salonica, Greece.

Dear General Roberts:

Shortly after you get this letter a year will have elapsed since the No. 4 Canadian General Hospital was established. It may be that you will have some celebration to signify the event, and I am sending you this letter of greeting which may be read should you hold any such celebration.

You have had a year of difficulties and hard experiences, not the least of which I am sure was the long period of waiting and of comparative inactivity. That, however, has been passed, and the winter that you have spent at Salonica has earned for you an excellent reputation from those among whom you care as strangers. The reports that have come to us constantly during the winter speak of the efficient service that the Hospital has rendered and have brought great pleasure to your friends at home. It is a constant source of satisfaction to learn month after month that the work of the Hospital is fulfilling the expectations of the University.

The Women's Committee is still at work, ready in emergency to send you help, and I am sure that the public is always pleased to learn of the services well rendered by those in whom it took such an interest as they went forth.

We hope that you will be kept in health and vigour and that when you return home at the close of the campaign your ranks will be unbroken.

Yours sincerely,

President.

February 29th, 1916

General J. A. Roberts,

O.C. No.4 Canadian General Hospital, (University of Toronto)

Salonica, Greece.

My dear General Roberts:

I have to-day had a letter from Mrs. McPhedran, the wife of Captain J. H. McPhedran, stating that Sir James Mackenzie asked the War Office some time ago to allow Dr. McPhedran to return to England in order to supervise the heart work of the entire Canadian Army in England. Sir James is very anxious to establish a record of scientific heart work for the English Army but he has been unable so far to get a full complement of men. He has written General Carleton Jones asking for Dr. McPhedran's recall. Dr. Jones was doubtful because he belongs to our unit, and he does not wish to offend our unit by recalling another man. Dr. McPhedran knows absolutely nothing about this, his wife tells me. I have written to Mrs. McPhedran that I would refer the matter to you, and advised her to get Sir James Mackenzie to write to you, because I told her that the final decision as to whether the transfer should be made would rest with the Officer Commanding, and that probably General Jones would do what you would agree to. I suppose you had better talk the matter over with Dr. McPhedran who may have heard of it from his wife before my letter reaches you.

I am glad to hear from Dr. Clarke that you are well supplied with materials. The ladies will now not need to throw so much energy into work for you. I judge from the general situation that you are not likely to have an attack made on Salonica for some time to come.

We are likely to have some public meeting here towards the end of the month which will serve as an anniversary for the organisation of the unit. I believe there are quite a number of ~~plans~~ plans that will make an interesting evening. We are all delighted with the good news that you send us from time to time.

Yours sincerely,

President.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

With the British Force in Greece,

March 21, 1916.

President R. A. Falconer C.M.G., Litt.D.,

The University,

Toronto, Ont.,

CANADA.

Dear President Falconer,-

I have refrained from writing to you for some time as I have considered that in writing to the Dean I have been writing to you as well. Anything I have had to say to him has been for your information as much as for him and this fact I attempted to make plain so that the letters would be immediately sent to you. I trust that this arrangement has proved quite satisfactory as I considered it would be inadvisable to send two letters containing the same subject matter.

In the first place I wish to express my personal and sincere thanks to you for the interest you have shown in my family. Mrs. Roberts has informed me of the kindly way in which you visited her at the time of the baby's recent illness and that kindly thought on your part has appealed to me in a very particular spot, as my wife and kiddies are about the only things in this world worth while, according to my view point. It is extremely gratifying to me to learn from recent letters that the baby's health seems to be improving although my wife has had to shoulder a great deal of responsibility and worry on account of this dear little girlie.

On receipt of your letter I spoke to Capt. MacKenzie regarding his University work next Season and we both feel that it is his duty to return to you as soon as you wish to ask for him. It has been a source of considerable comfort and help to have him with us during the past Winter but as there seems little probability that we will be called upon to face any of the severe Balkan epidemics, such as typhus, cholera etc., we feel that MacKenzie's usefulness to the University far transcends any other consideration. We are also satisfied that Duncan Graham and Imrie are perfectly capable of satisfactorily carrying on the laboratory work here.

We have discussed the question of celebrating the anniversary of the organization of this Unit but as yet have arrived at no definite conclusion as to the form this celebration will take. However, it is my intention to read your letter to the Officers and Sisters on that date no matter what else we may do to remind us of the fact that we have been in existence as a hospital representing the University of Toronto for one year on March 25th.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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Col. Chambers has returned to England but you can rest assured that the strength of the hospital in the Medical Department has not evidenced any weakness to date.

I am writing the Dean in the course of a few days so will reserve any items of news for that letter.

With sincere regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

*Q. P. R. 1918*

469

T. D. FORM 112

Coll 1631

# Canadian Pacific Railway Company's Telegraph

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**J. McMILLAN,**  
Manager Telegraphs, Montreal.

153 ra nu 13

Salonica May 7

President Falconer

University Toronto

2225

Captain Norman Yellowlees accidentally drowned  
please notify parents.

Roberts

3:44pm



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

With the British Force in Greece,

May 6, 1916.

President R. A. Falconer C.M.G., Litt.D.,  
The University,  
Toronto, Ont.,  
CANADA.

Dear President Falconer,-

I feel that I must let you have immediately, the particulars relating to the sad accident resulting in the death by drowning of Captain Norman Yellowlees, as I know how all his friends at home will be anxiously waiting for particulars concerning it. I am sending this to you as I have already advised you by cable asking you to convey the sad information to his parents and I also feel that you can convey the particulars to them in a much nicer way than I could by making any bald statements in a letter.

About 2.30 A.M., Friday, May 5th, the camp was awakened by sounds of heavy gun fire from the war ships and the anti-aircraft batteries in our immediate vicinity and on emerging from our tents we beheld one of the most spectacular sights we have seen since coming to this area. Several search-lights from the war ships and the anti-aircraft stations had got the Zeppelin in their rays and it was evidently making frantic efforts to escape these attentions. The batteries were making excellent practice apparently, the shells bursting in the immediate vicinity of the giant air-ship. The continued use of rockets also added to the spectacle and for a time the clear starry night was made almost as bright as day from the incessant illuminations. The artillery practice continued for about ten minutes and then the Zeppelin was lost to the search-light beams. Some 20 minutes later several severe explosions resembling bombs were heard from the direction of the Sea toward the mouth of the Galiko and Vardar rivers. Shortly afterwards a tremendous flame was seen to shoot high into the heavens and continue for a few minutes. When this subsided the fire continued to assume the shape of a long fat cigar and from here appeared to be low down either in the sea or on the ground close to the sea. It was visible for fully half an hour and one of the search-lights on a war ship near the point at the entrance of the harbour continued to illuminate the area from which the flames arose for a considerable time. Later the fire gradually burned down until only a glow persisted.

On calling up the Main Signal Station we were informed that the authorities believed the Zeppelin had been destroyed and early in the morning word was brought to us from the French Artillery Camp that one of the French aviators had visited the scene in an aeroplane shortly after sunrise and had confirmed the rumour of the destruction of the Zeppelin, the explanation being that the giant air-craft had been so injured by our fire that it was forced to descend and when doing so had thrown out its bombs before coming too close to the earth. On alighting the crew set fire to it and escaped into the night in the marshy area surrounding the mouth of the Vardar.



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In the morning, from our camp one could plainly distinguish against the sky-line a heaped up mass of wreckage which to the naked eye looked like a group of small trees but under examination with the glasses assumed the outline of a distorted mass of steel structure. Smoke arose from the area for a considerable time also.

Everyone about the camp was considerably excited over the success of our anti-aircraft defences in bringing down the Zeppelin and greatly gratified at having witnessed the magnificent spectacle of the early morning. Naturally the curiosity of everyone was aroused to view the wreckage from close quarters and many of the Officers asked permission to make an effort to reach it. During the morning several parties started off on foot and some others borrowed horses for the undertaking.

About 11 A.M., Captain Yellowlees accompanied by Captain George Wilson left on horseback. They took with them each, a haversack containing lunch, water bottle, automatic Colt Revolver and a camera, these articles being carried in their pockets or suspended across their shoulders. They made their way across the low-lying land to the South of the camp until they reached the Galiko River some distance below the Monastir Railway Bridge. Here they forded the stream and proceeded in the direction of the estuary of the Vardar where the skeleton of the Zeppelin could be seen. For a great deal of the time after leaving the Galiko they seem to have encountered a considerable amount of marshy land which they experienced a good deal of difficulty in getting through. Finally they struck the east branch of the estuary of the Vardar and believing that other parties had crossed it at some point, they endeavoured to find a fordable place along the stream. Failing in this, Captain Yellowlees who was determined to cross, proposed to Captain Wilson that they swim their horses across at a place where the stream appeared to be roughly, 30 or 40 yards in width. Capt. Wilson objected on the grounds that the stream looked too swift and deep to be fordable, also he felt that if others had crossed it at any other point they should make a search along the bank and discover by the horses' tracks where the crossing had been effected, but Captain Yellowlees over-ruled him and urged his horse into the stream driving it at an angle upward against the current. Captain Wilson followed directly behind him his horse's nose being so close that it was actually touching the tail of Captain Yellowlees' mount. They had proceeded only a few yards from the bank when suddenly both horses lost their footing and disappeared completely under the water. What occurred to Captain Yellowlees during the next few moments, Captain Wilson is unable to say as he was fully occupied in clinging to his mount. He had sufficient presence of mind to grasp the saddle and with his heels urged the horse in its struggles against the current. In a few seconds Captain Wilson's horse regained footing and after considerable effort struggled up the bank which was apparently fairly steep at this point. Just as he reached the top Captain Wilson heard Captain Yellowlees call "George", and being greatly upset and excited at the moment he attempted to throw himself from the horse's right side but his foot caught in the stirrup and he fell to the ground directly under the horse's feet.



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The animal plunged a little but in an instant he was able to disengage his foot and rushed into the water in an endeavour to reach Captain Yellowlees. He swam toward him and succeeded in getting within three or four yards of him. Captain Yellowlees was unable to swim and his struggles aided by the force of the current were only forcing him farther away from the shore. While Captain Wilson was still three or four yards away Captain Yellowlees disappeared under the water and was not seen again alive. Captain Wilson being burdened with all his clothes, belt, haversac, camera, water bottle, etc., was almost exhausted by this time and had the greatest difficulty in reaching the bank where he lay for some time in an exhausted condition before being able to make any further efforts. His account of his immediate subsequent actions is not very clear and evidently the poor chap was in such a state of acute mental and physical exhaustion that his mind is more or less a blank as to what occurred for some time subsequent to his regaining the shore. In the meantime Captain Yellowlees' horse had regained the bank although Captain Wilson did not see it do so and has no recollection of what happened to it at the time but when he was able to get up and make further efforts, both horses had disappeared. He seems to have been so much upset that for three hours following the incident he was more or less completely lost as to his surroundings and wandered about and struggled in the marsh, at times to his arm-pits in mud and water. Many times he had to lie down in an exhausted condition until his strength returned and he was able to renew his efforts. Finally he found a track which led him out of the marsh and eventually he reached the Galiko River. This he forded and proceeded toward Tekeli. While nearing this point he was fortunately met by three of the Officers of our own Unit, Majors McVicar, King Smith and Royce. These Officers declare that Captain Wilson's condition was pitiable due to his extreme mental and physical exhaustion. They conveyed him to camp when every step was taken to counteract the effects of his trying experience.

As soon as word concerning Captain Yellowlees' death reached camp, the military authorities in Salonica were notified and steps taken to institute a rigorous search for the recovery of his body. The conditions to be faced are peculiar and exceedingly hard to overcome. The area in which the accident took place is a tremendous marsh formed by the estuary of the Vardar and Galiko rivers which break up into several channels as they approach the sea. This marshy area extends about 15 miles from Salonica City, almost to the foot hills of Mount Olympus. The above mentioned channels are of various depths depending upon the amount of rain which has fallen and in some places the water continuously stands in great marshy tracts of varying extent. Everywhere the ground is covered with a dense growth of rushes, reeds and marsh grass which sometimes rises to the height of twelve to fifteen feet. Along the borders of the water courses there is also a growth of more or less stunted bushes. In most places it is absolutely impracticable to attempt to cross this area. Recent heavy rains have tended to deepen the marshy areas, making the going worse than usual. Few of us knew anything about the conditions that would have to be overcome before the Zeppelin could be reached as none of the available maps have any accurate particulars relating to this marshy tract, otherwise not a single man would have thought of undertaking the trip. Where the water courses enter the sea the channel is widened and becomes much shallower. In many places a distinct bar



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varying in depth from a few inches to two or three feet is met with. The channel at all points consists of soft mud. Captain Wilson and other Officers who had seen something of the district where the accident took place informed me that it would be impossible to follow the stream to the sea; also the strength of the current here was judged to be from eight to ten miles an hour. Under these circumstances we felt that it would be necessary to attack the problem from the sea front side.

With this object in view I went into the City early this morning and after handing in a report to the Base authorities I enlisted the assistance of the Provost Marshal's department and through them reached the Greek Military and Police authorities so as to disseminate the word concerning the drowning among all classes who would be most likely to come in contact with the body and I also instructed them to offer a reward to the person who should recover the body. Then I saw the Naval authorities and they are doing everything in their power to aid me in the matter. Later I went to the Greek Officer in charge of the Port and through him had the fishermen of the district notified and warned to be on the look out and even enlisting their assistance in the search. I also procured the services of a motor boat with which I propose to daily patrol the area involved. After having done this, two Greek boatmen who are supposed to know the area, fastened their boats behind the motor boat and we started for the estuary in the region of which I judged the stream in which Norman was drowned entered the ocean. My search along the water front was a bit disappointing as a great deal of hard work resulted only in exploring a few of the numerous channels which presented. Owing to the low-lying character of the land it was impossible to see beyond one's immediate vicinity hence no distinguishing inland marks could be used as guides.

This morning another party under Colonel Hendry's direction proceeded to the scene of the accident on horseback and after considerable difficulty they succeeded in following the stream to its outlet into the sea. To-morrow morning I must hold an official Court of Enquiry to satisfy the military demands of such a case and as soon as these proceedings are completed I propose, along with Colonel Hendry to try and take a motor boat or some other suitable craft up the channel in the hopes that we may be successful in recovering the body and if not to gain all necessary information to aid us in carrying out a further systematic patrol of the waters involved. Also I propose enlisting the services of the Naval authorities in case they have any seamen who are trained in grappling operations as I will feel very much happier once I have dragged at least a considerable area of the stream in the vicinity of where the accident actually occurred. We are determined to leave absolutely no stone unturned in our endeavour to recover Captain Yellowlees' body and as you may judge from the foregoing we instituted the search with all the thoroughness that we could command and are enlisting the assistance of anyone and everyone who we feel could be useful in the matter. I will advise you in the course of a few days how matters are progressing and I sincerely trust that I will be able to report a favourable termination.



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Naturally we are all feeling very blue over the incident, as by his sterling, manly, lovable nature, Captain Yellowlees has endeared himself to every member of the organization and his sterling worth in all departments of the work has earned for him the complete respect of everyone. Personally I feel his loss very deeply indeed and I trust you will convey to his parents and friends our deepest expressions of sympathy.

Yours very sincerely,

*J. A. Newton*

May 19th, 1918

General J. A. Roberts,

Officer Commanding No. 4 Canadian General Hospital,

Salonica.

Dear General Roberts:

I intended to write to you last week to express to you my deep sympathy with you in the very serious loss that the Hospital has sustained in the death of Dr. Yellowlees. It will be, I am sure, not only a loss in efficiency but personally to you and the members of the staff a real grief.

I received your cable on Sunday evening, and immediately went over to deliver the sad news to Mrs. Yellowlees and her daughter. You may imagine what a shock it was to them. Mr. Yellowlees unfortunately was from home, but we got him on long distance telephone about thirty miles from Ottawa, and by great exertions he caught the night train, though even then there was an accident on the train from which, however, he had no injury. They are taking their loss bravely, but they feel it intensely.

A cable message came through England stating that his horse sank in a morass when he was crossing a swift river on his way to a wreck, and that he was carried away by the stream. Also that some of the nurses saw him at the time and themselves narrowly escaped. It has been a comfort to his family to know that he was doing his duty at the time, and of course they are surmising as to what kind of duty he was engaged in. We are all waiting patiently for a letter that should

come in a few weeks. I have on all sides heard expressions of great regret. You will realise even more than we do his true worth. By this time you will have had other arrangements made for his place, and I hope that the work of progressing satisfactorily. We are getting news of losses constantly, the list of the fallen now being over fifty. The last one was poor Kylie, who died on Sunday morning in Owen Sound of typhoid fever. He was Adjutant of the 147th and I think there is no doubt that his strenuous military duties laid him open to the disease. When the war is over and you come back you will find our ranks thinner, but I cannot help hoping that the war may close before the beginning of the winter.

Will you kindly arrange with J. J. Mackenzie to leave Salonica in time to arrive here not later than the third week in September? If you will let me know by return mail when he should leave Salonica in order to make connections I will at once communicate with the Militia Department and get them to authorise his return.

The Dean also tells me that we are greatly hampered by the absence of Dr. Watson, and that if you think he can be spared and that the other surgeons will not feel that his coming would throw undue burden upon them or be a favour shown to him we should be glad to ask for his recall.

I have almost come to believe that there may not be a big driv

this summer, and possibly you may not have such a run upon your Hospital as we expected.

Please give my kind regards to Colonel Hendrie, Primrose and the others. Unfortunately Dr. Gordon is not making as rapid headway as we could wish, though Fred Starr told me this week that he does not find anything malignant.

With kind regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

President.

ackdgd 18.7.16 steps taken through Ottawa for recall of  
for Mackenzie & Watson & Yellowlees family notified as you  
had been in constant touch with them.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

With the British Force in Greece,

June 19, 1916.

President R. A. Falconer C.M.G., Litt.D.,

The University,

Toronto, Ont.,

CANADA.

Dear President Falconer:-

Your letter of May 19th has just reached me and I wish to thank you very much for all the expressions of sympathy contained. We have all missed Norman very much. He was the sort of a young man who improved very very much on acquaintance and it is putting our feelings toward him very lightly when I tell you that he was loved and respected by every member of this organization. As you doubtless know long before this, we were able to recover his body although all the frantic efforts that I made for the first two weeks were absolutely unavailing. The body was found on a shoal just at the mouth of the river as it emerged into the bay of Salonica and was discovered by one of the Naval patrols that we had requisitioned for our assistance. Naturally, you will understand that the body was not in a fit state for transportation or even for delaying the funeral ceremony beyond a very few hours after its recovery from the water. He was buried with full military honours in the British Military cemetery as soon as possible after we obtained possession of the body. I might state that Col. Hendry and I were able to positively identify the remains. There is not the slightest doubt on that point.

The Officers of the Unit are erecting a suitable monument over Norman's grave and we are having it erected in the most substantial manner possible for the preservation of the area, a solid brick wall being built into the ground to a depth of about three feet around the grave and two large marble slabs cemented above with a suitable inscription on the upper slab. It not only gives one the greatest sense of security concerning his remains but it is also the best and most substantial type of memorial that we can obtain. I have written to his father and other relatives full particulars concerning his death and burial so I fancy you will have no further need of conveying this information to them unless you feel so inclined. The news concerning Sisters accompanying him and being witnesses of the tragedy is absolutely without foundation. Not a single Sister left Camp on that day. Capt. Yellowlees and Capt. Geo. Wilson were entirely alone at the time and were seven or eight miles from camp. The rumour that some of the Sisters also had a narrow escape from drowning is a statement as far from the truth as could possibly be made. I cannot understand how any sane person could originate such an unfortunate report as that was.

Doubtless by this time you know all the details concerning the death of Col. Primrose's son Howard and I can assure you the news was received in this camp with every feeling of the



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most genuine sympathy and consideration for Lieut. Col. Primrose and his family. Col. Primrose, by his thoroughly manly, upright conduct and persistent honourable efforts to aid this organization in every detail that lay in his power has endeared himself to every member of it and to none more than to the Commanding Officer. I have not bothered consulting Prim very much on military affairs, because, as you will understand, I alone must handle and know absolutely every detail associated with the carrying on of this hospital. Any other course would only lead to confusion of action and the consequent unsatisfactory conditions that must result. Prim's lack of earlier military training perhaps accounts for this because there is no person to whom I would sooner turn for counsel and assistance in the various emergencies that have arisen than to Col. Primrose. His presence, however, has been at all times the greatest comfort to me and when I have gone to him for advice and consultation his judgment on the various subjects submitted has always been broad minded and extremely loyal to me and to the organization. He has my complete confidence, respect and admiration. After the announcement of his son's death he bore up bravely before us all and tried to carry on as though nothing had happened but in a few days it was not hard to see that he was almost heart broken and that his whole mental trend turned toward his wife and her anxiety at home. Under the circumstances I went to him and had a talk with him, Col. Hendry and Lieut. Col. McGillivray and we decided that in fairness to Prim I should apply for leave of absence with permission for him to return home. This has been done and he is to embark on the Hospital Ship "Formosa" which sails to-morrow morning. I am mighty sorry indeed to see Prim go. I will miss him more than I can tell you but I also feel that in fairness to him it is the only course that could be pursued under the present circumstances.

I am losing by the same steamer another of my Officers who has been particularly valuable to me at all times since leaving home. I refer to Capt. Geo. Boyer. He has been an extremely able, conscientious Officer in the discharge of his duties here and his work has always been very reliable. He will be a hard man for me to replace and just at the present juncture I shall miss him very much. In December last, when he first received news concerning his mother's serious illness Capt. Boyer applied for leave of absence to return home to her but this was refused. Some of his friends at home then took up the matter with the Canadian Militia Department with the result that leave was granted to him on that authority. The word came to me some time ago but as Capt. Boyer's mother had recovered from the effects of her operation he was not anxious to leave here at that time but asked that the leave might remain open in order that he could return home in case his mother's illness assumed a serious phase. I again applied for him along those lines but a few days ago received a peremptory order from the War Office stating that Capt. Boyer must accept his leave immediately. In compliance with this order he is returning home.

Some two months ago I applied for the return of Capt.



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-: 3 :-

J. J. MacKenzie to England as he was very anxious, apparently, to spend the Summer there. We have received no further communication concerning him since that date but indirectly, through Lieut. Col. Adami in London we were informed that the permission had been granted and that we could expect its receipt at any time. It has not arrived to date and I think MacKenzie is getting a little anxious when he sees all the others going away. However, I can do nothing further in the matter but I am writing General Jones again and would advise you at home, to apply through the Militia Department for his return in order to make absolutely certain that it will go through.

Concerning Capt. B. P. Watson, I have not been able to talk the matter over with him since the receipt of your letter as he is visiting some friends out of camp this evening but I will discuss the situation as soon as he returns. In his case also it would expedite matters greatly if you would make your application to the Minister of Militia at the same time you are applying for J. J. MacKenzie.

The hospital has been moved from the old site on the Monastir Road and is now occupying what is known as the new hut site at Kalamaria, some two miles to the East of Salonica. We have a magnificent group of buildings, compactly and conveniently arranged, absolutely new and when all the conveniences are in place I can assure you there will be no finer military hospital in the whole of the British Military Service. As you doubtless already know, the hospital has earned for itself a unique and particularly gratifying position in the military world here and from many letters that I have recently received from England and France, notably one from the Director of Medical Services, I can inform you that the work which the hospital has done has placed it very high in the scale of such military organizations. Although we have lost a number of the senior men I do not want you to feel that the efficiency of this institution is impaired in the slightest. We are capable of doing just as much and just as good work now as we ever were. I will probably fill all the vacancies with a younger group of men but you can rest satisfied that the reputation of the University will not suffer in consequence.

After the return of Lieut. Col. Chambers to England, Major Don McGillivray was placed in charge of the medical work and at the same time I made application for promotion for several of my Officers, Major McGillivray among them. Yesterday I received official notification from the War Office that Major McGillivray's promotion to the rank of Lieut. Col., had been approved but that the others asked for could not be granted at the present time.

Everyone joins with me in sending sincere respects and very best wishes to the President.

Yours faithfully,

*J. A. Roberts*